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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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SUBJECT: EGYPT AND PAN-ARAB SENTIMENT

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SUMMARY. TWO RECENT EDITORIALS BY SADAT SUPPORTERS INDICATIVE OF GROWING EGYPTIAN CONCERN ABOUT EGYPT'S DIFFERENCES WITH LARGE PART OF ARAB WORLD. WHILE NOT NEW PHENOMENON, STALLED PEACE PROCESS AND ISRAELI "INVASION" OF LEBANON HAVE CAUSED RESURGENCE OF CONCERN ABOUT EGYPT'S ARAB POLICY. RECENT ISRAELI STATEMENTS THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL FACE "COMMON ENEMY" IN PLO AND LEBANON EVENTS SHOULD NOT HINDER NEGOTIATIONS SUGGEST ISRAELIS MAY BE BADLY MISJUDING SITUATION. FURTHER ARAB HUMILIALTION AT HANDS OF ISRAELIS IN LEBANON OR ELSE-WHERE WILL HEIGHTEN PAN-ARAB SENTIMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN LAST WEEK'S OCTOBER MAGAZINE SADAT SUPPORTER
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AND PROMINENT WRITER IHSAN ABDUL QADDOUS TALKED ABOUT ARAB SOLIDARITY AND SADAT INITIATIVE. HE SAID ONE RESULT OF INITIATIVE WAS "LIMITED LOSS" FOR ARAB SOLIDARITY BECAUSE ARABS NOW DIVIDED INTO "REJECTIONISTS", THOSE WHO HAVE KEPT SILENT, AND SUPPORTERS. EGYPT, HE ADMITTED, HAD NOT SO FAR GAINED RETURN OF LAND AND THERE NOT MUCH HOPE THIS WILL HAPPEN. NEVERTHELESS,

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HE NOTED IMPROVEMENT IN EGYPT'S WORLD IMAGE AND CORRES-
PONDING WEAKENING OF ISRAEL'S.

2. LEFTIST AL-AHALI MARCH 22 CARRIED ARTICLE BY HIGHLY
RESPECTED JOURNALIST AND SOMETIME SADAT SPEECH WRITER
AHMED BAHA AL-DIN ENTITLED "ABOUT EGYPT AND ARABISM".
(AL-AHALI CLAIMED AHRAM HAD REFUSED TO PUBLISH ARTICLE,
BUT AL-AHALI PLEASED TO PUBLISH IT IN ORDER TO OFFER
EGYPTIAN WRITER RIGHT TO EXERCISE FREE SPEECH AND BECAUSE
ARTICLE CONNECTED WITH CURRENT DEBATE GOING ON IN EGYPT.)
BAHA AL-DIN CLAIMED BIG POWERS (IN WHICH HE INCLUDED
RUSSIA, AMERICA, EUROPE AND ISRAEL) WANT TO SEE EGYPT
TURN ITS BACK ON ARAB WORLD. THIS WOULD SERVE THEIR
INTERESTS SINCE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO DEAL SEPARATELY
WITH ARAB STATES INSTEAD OF AS A BLOC, EVEN AS A BLOC
TIED TOGETHER WITH FLIMSIEST THREADS. HE CRITICIZED BOTH
THOSE WHO SUPPORT EGYPT'S ABANDONING ARABISM AND THOSE
WHO CLAIM EGYPT HAS LEFT ARAB FOLD. EGYPT'S AFFILIATION
TO ARABISM, HE SAID, IS LASTING BECAUSE TIES ARE ORGANIC
REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL DIFFERENCES.

3. BAHA AL-DIN DID NOT CLAIM SADAT INITIATIVE CONTRADICTS
ARAB SOLIDARITY. HE ARGUES THAT ANY INITIATIVE BY ANY
GOVERNMENT OR LEADER CREATES OPPONENTS. HE CRITICIZED
THOSE WHO SAY THAT FOR MATERIAL REASONS EGYPT SHOULD ABAN-
DON ARAB COURSE, POINTING OUT THAT MATERIAL SUPPORT FROM
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ARAB WORLD IS MUCH GREATER THAN THAT FROM AMERICA, EUROPE
AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. BAHA AL-DIN IMPLIES
ARAB SOLIDARITY IS RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ARABS, INCLUDING
THOSE WHO CRITICIZE EGYPT AS HAVING ABANDONED ARABISM.

5. COMMENT. THESE TWO ARTICLES HAVE CAUSED PARTICULAR
COMMENT BY EGYPTIANS BECAUSE OF STATURE OF WRITERS.
CONCERN ABOUT GOE'S DIFFERENCES WITH LARGE PART OF ARAB
WORLD HAS BEEN FAVORITE THEME OF LEFTISTS, NASSERISTS
(PRIMARILY HAYKAL), AND OTHER SADAT CRITICS SINCE BEFORE
SINAI II. THIS CONCERN HAS SPREAD TO SOME OF SADAT'S
SUPPORTERS MAINLY BECAUSE OF STALLED PEACE PROCESS.
ISRAELI "INVASION" OF LEBANON HAS NOW CAUSED NEW UPSURGE
OF ARABISM. ARAB HUMILIATION OVER ISRAELI ACTION AND
ARAB IMPOTENCE NOT AFTER ALL LIMITED TO REJECTIONISTS.

6. RECENT ISRAELI STATEMENTS ABOUT ISRAEL'S AND EGYPT'S
"COMMON ENEMY BEING THE PLO" AND ABOUT NOT ALLOWING
RECENT CYCLE OF VIOLENCE TO HINDER GOI-GOE NEGOTIATIONS
SUGGEST ISRAELIS MAY BE BADLY MISJUDGING EGYPTIAN
SENSITIVITY TO LEBANESE EVENTS. WE DOUBT THAT THE RE-
SURGENCE OF ARAB CONCERNS AND SENTIMENTS IS LIKELY TO

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AFFECT SADAT'S THINKING, BUT SOME OF HIS CLOSEST FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS, SUCH AS FORMIN KAMEL AND MINSTATE GHALI, ARE KNOWN TO BE DISTRESSED BY THE BREACH AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE ARAB WORLD REUNITED. EILTS

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